

U.S. Seeks to Assure Russia It Won't Build 'Heavy' ABM

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In an effort to get arms control talks under way, the Johnson administration is determined to convince Russia that there are no plans for the foreseeable future to build a "heavy" missile defense against possible Soviet nuclear attack.

Administration officials say Monday's announcement of a \$5 billion "thin" system to guard against future Chinese attack in no way should be regarded as a first step toward a \$40 billion antiballistic missile (ABM) system that would defend against Russian missiles.

They say the Defense Department's top scientists agree it is technically impossible for the United States at this time to produce a system that could protect the American public from an all-out Soviet missile attack.

Want Full Understanding

Russia is building an ABM. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said in his San Francisco speech Monday that

Russia and the United States could annihilate each other. It is believed that even with an ABM system, more than 100 million Americans would die in any attack.

The administration wants the Russians to know its views because of concern that Moscow will continue to avoid arms control talks if it believes the United States plans to outstrip it in development of an ABM.

Presently, the Russians have begun deployment of what McNamara called "a light and modest" system. This defense is regarded by the United States as easily penetrable by U.S. missiles.

It is hoped by the administration that Russia will come to the same conclusion the United States has reached:

Current ABM development is ineffective and costly except in defending against a small, unsophisticated attack that might come from China or some other small power. The best policy would be to acknowledge that a sort of nuclear parity exists and try to turn the nuclear race downwards.

Freeze Logical Now

Thus, the Russians are being told that the United States recognizes that they have caught up with it in nuclear power so the U.S. wants discussions to see about freezing and then reducing arms levels—if only to free resources for other purposes.

This point if view has been expressed many times to Soviet leaders. Earlier this month, President Johnson instructed U.S. Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson in Moscow to inform the Kremlin that unless talks began soon, he would order a U.S. deployment of a "thin" system.

But Johnson also told Thomp-

son to stress the continued U.S. desire in holding arms control discussions.

Thompson has returned to Washington and is expected to take an active role in Soviet-American discussions in New York next week.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk will spend all of the week in New York and is expected to see Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko during that time. Thompson and chief disarmament negotiator William C. Foster also are slated to take part in the talks.

To Discuss Missile Control

A principal topic will be the question of talks on missile control. Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin has given his approval in principle to such talks, but has failed to agree on a mutual date.

In McNamara's view—and this undoubtedly will be relayed to the Russians—it will take five years to build the "thin" system just announced. During this period, research will continue on advanced and new types of defenses.

After the "thin" system is built, a hard look will be taken at the military balance. If some unpredictable breakthrough has occurred which would give the United States a defense that was impenetrable, such a system might be deployed if no agreement with the Russians had been reached by then.

However, it is anticipated that Russia will keep pace with the United States, and maintain an effective offense.

McNamara's moves also may be affected by congressional pressure for a big ABM.